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SONNETS OF A PORTRAIT-PAINTER. By ARTHUR DAVISON FICKE. New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1914.

In this sequence of fifty-seven sonnets the decorative element predominates, and it gives real artistic pleasure. Mr. Ficke uses with deftness and a subtle sense of combined rhythmic and emotional effects the difficult form he has chosen. His sonnets are Shakespearian in structure, and have at times something of an Elizabethan ring, as in the concluding lines of Sonnet II, in which the fabric of thought and music is knit up with a homely phrase:

And yet, being mad, I am not mad alone.
Alight you come! . . . That folly dwarfs my own.

There is, perhaps, an unnecessary effect of mystery in the sonnets—what seems like a deliberate effort to fascinate by intimations and half-lights. Then, too, there is little in these verses that can deeply touch the general heart, though there is, as in much of the minor poetry of to-day, an impassioned and ingenious expression of personal feeling or mood. This personal feeling seldom expands into real power. We read such verses tentatively, by way of experimenting with our own powers of imaginative feeling, but seldom can we give ourselves up to them; seldom do we wish to remember or quote them.

In general there is little fault to find with Mr. Ficke's artistic method. In one or two cases, however, he introduces into his songs a note of what seems rather blatant actuality, as in the lines:

See—the low, lustful, thinly maskèd faces!
They crowd about you drinking in your bloom.
In fancy each a taxi calls and races
With you to his own sybaritic room . . .

Such lines hardly deepen, and certainly do not refine, the prose of commonplace jealousy.

THE SUN THIEF. By RHYS CARPENTER. London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1914.

To little of the verse published nowadays can the name poetry, in its full traditional sense, be applied so unreservedly as to Mr. Carpenter's rendering of the story of Prometheus, which he calls *The Sun Thief*. Mr. Carpenter's imagination works at ease with a great theme and in large spaces. It creates a world massive, tangible, full of the sense of real light and real shadow. Gazing into this imaginary world, the reader feels a sort of magical enlargement of his faculties—the same effect that is sometimes produced by great pictorial art. And this world is the real world of nature and of truth: it is not a world of strained metaphors and romantic emotions; one can breathe in it, and deeply. Never is the reader oppressed with the stifling sense of artificiality: the symbolism of the poem blends so perfectly with its reality that the two enhance each other.

Mr. Carpenter's English has a freshness, a buoyancy, an elemental quality, that allies it with Greek. The manner of his expression, however, in no case calls undue attention to itself; his language seems simply adequate. The verses of the poem, unobtrusively melodious, the word-pictures untouched by the vanity of exceptional phrasing and simply obedient to the inward vision, convey their meaning so directly into the mind that one takes no separate thought for style or cadence. The effect is indefinably exhilarating—an effect of clear beauty woven out of the several elements of thought, mental imagery, and musical cadence, yet single in its effect. Remarkable, too, is the unity of impression produced by the poetic drama as a whole. That its dual time-scheme never seems incongruous—that the drama enacts itself easily in the space of a single day, and yet seems adequately to symbolize the age-long struggle of humanity as seen through the eyes of Prometheus—is proof of real power on the part of the poet. To foreshorten thus, an artist must have large conceptions and a convincing vigor of expression.

The lyrics, too, which are included in the same volume with *The Sun Thief*, are, like it, classical in feeling, full of light rather than color, expressive of a rare, keen sense of beauty, free from the oppressively personal note and from the cloying superfluity of prettiness. A little spectral they seem in their imagery, airy rather than earthy; but though they are wrought with a perfection of form that borders on the too perfect, they are never cold. Always one feels in them the force of virile feeling, and of an imaginative quality that is vigorous and peculiarly masculine. These verses have an originality, and clearness of conception, that is very different from mere novelty of material, striking sensuousness of imagery, or intensity of superinduced mood.